

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
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P R 071545Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2451
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
USMISSION USUN
USMISSION SINAI
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PEPR, PINT, IS
SUBJECT: THE EMERGENCE OF A COUNTER-CAMPAIGN TO "PEACE NOW"

REF: TEL AVIV 4578

1. SUMMARY: THE INEVITABLE COUNTER-CAMPAIGN TO THE
"PEACE NOW" MOVEMENT IS BEGINNING TO TAKE SHAPE. A
LITTLE SLOW IN GETTING STARTED, IT IS TAKING THE PRE-
DICTABLE FORM OF LETTERS, NEWSPAPER ADS AND PLANNED DE-
MONSTRATIONS. AT LEAST TO SOME EXTENT "SECURE PEACE,"
AS THE NEW EFFORT IS LIKELY TO BE CALLED, IS THE HANDI-
WORK OF HERUT. AWARE OF THE RISKS IN A COUNTER-CAMPAIGN,
THE DECISION TO GO AHEAD WAS PRECEDED BY CONSIDERABLE
SOUL-SEARCHING AMONG HERUT LEADERS. THE COMPETING
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CAMPAIGNS MAY WELL ENGENDER POLARIZATION AMONG THE PUBLIC
ON THE PEACE PROCESS AND STIMULATE A NATIONAL DEBATE
WHICH HAS THUS FAR FAILED TO GET OFF THE GROUND, IN
ANY EVENT THE IMAGE OF A FOREIGN POLICY CONSENSUS HAS
ALREADY BEEN UNDERMINED. END SUMMARY

2. ON APRIL 6 TWO OR THREE DOZEN YOUTHS CONDUCTED A

PRO-BEGIN DEMONSTRATION OUTSIDE THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE. TODAY'S NEWSPAPERS CONTAIN A NUMBER OF SMALL ADS EXPRESSING SUPPORT FOR THE PRIME MINISTER IN HIS PEACE EFFORTS. ONE LISTS THE NAMES OF SOME 40 PROFESSIONALS; A SECOND IS SIGNED IZL (IRGUN) PIONEERS; AND ANOTHER BEARS THE IMPRINT OF THE "MOVEMENT FOR A SECURE PEACE." "HUNDREDS" OF LETTERS OF SUPPORT HAVE BEEN MAILED TO THE PRIME MINISTER (ACCORDING TO THE ESTIMATE BEGIN GAVE THE AMBASSADOR APRIL 6). TOMORROW EVENING (AFTER SHABBAT) A COUNTRYWIDE SIGNATURE CAMPAIGN WILL BE INAUGURATED. HOWEVER, THE BIG EVENT, A RALLY IN SUPPORT OF BEGIN'S POLICIES, IS SCHEDULED FOR APRIL 15 AT THE SAME TEL AVIV SQUARE WHERE THE APRIL 1 DEMONSTRATION AGAINST THE GOI'S FOREIGN POLICY WAS HELD.

3. THIS SUDDEN ACTIVITY IN SUPPORT OF THE GOVERNMENT'S PEACE POLICY IS A DIRECT REACTION TO THE "PEACE NOW" CAMPAIGN AND AN EFFORT TO COUNTER ITS IMPACT. IT IS ALSO EVIDENCE THAT "PEACE NOW" HAS ACHIEVED SUFFICIENT SUCCESS TO VITIATE THE INITIAL TENDENCY OF GOVERNMENT SUPPORTERS TO IGNORE IT.

4. "SECURE PEACE," AS THE COUNTER-CAMPAIGN IS TENTATIVELY STYLED, APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN INSTIGATED, IF NOT FULLY ORGANIZED, BY HERUT. THE BRIEF TIME-LAG IN GETTING IT UNDERWAY REFLECTS DIVIDED COUNSEL IN THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PARTY OVER THE WISDOM OF MOUNTING AN OPPOSING EFFORT TO "PEACE NOW." PARTY LEADERS REALIZE THE RISKS INVOLVED: PUBLICITY AND SHARPER FOCUS ON THE "PEACE NOW" MOVEMENT AND THE LIKELIHOOD THAT SMALLER ATTENDANCE AND/OR ABSENCE OF SPONTANEITY AT THEIR RALLY WOULD INVITE INVIDIOUS COMPARISONS. HOWEVER, OBJECTIVE OBSERVERS BELIEVE PRO-GOVERNMENTAL FORCES HAD NO ALTERNATIVE TO SOME SORT OF COUNTER-CAMPAIGN. LEAVING THE FIELD ENTIRELY TO GRASSROOTS CRITICS OF BEGIN'S POLICIES COULD PERMIT A SNOWBALLING OF "PEACE NOW," THE VIEWPOINT THAT BEGIN SUPPORTERS NEEDED AN ORGANIZED MODE OF EXPRESSION APPEARS TO HAVE WON OUT WITHIN HERUT.

5. IT WILL COME AS NO SURPRISE IF THE "PEACE NOW" MOVEMENT STEPS UP ITS ACTIVITY TO MEET THE CHALLENGE OF "SECURE PEACE." THE HERETOFORE MODERATE CRITICISM OF THE PROTESTORS MAY WELL TAKE ON SHRILLER TONES AND MOVE TOWARD DIRECT ATTACKS ON BEGIN AND HIS GOVERNMENT. THUS THE POLARIZATION MOOTED IN REFTEL COULD HAVE BEEN GIVEN A HEALTHY PUCH BY THE SUDDEN OUTBREAK OF ADS AND THE SCHEDULING OF DEMONSTRATIONS. INSOFAR AS "SECURE PEACE" MATCHES THE SUCCESS OF "PEACE NOW," THE TWO MOVEMENTS

MAY PROVIDE POPULAR RALLYING POINTS FOR THE INCHOATE
DIFFERENCES AND DISCONTENT AMONG ISRAELIS OVER THE
CURRENT STATE OF PEACE NEGOTIATIONS. AT THE VERY LEAST,
THEY SHOULD GIVE IMPETUS TO A DEBATE ON THE PEACE ISSUES
THAT UNTIL NOW HAS LACKED FOCUS AND CLARITY-- THANKS IN
GREAT MEASURE TO THE GOVERNMENT'S SUCCESS IN PROJECTING
CONSENSUS. "PEACE NOW" HAS ALREADY ACHIEVED SIGNIFICANT
EROSION IN THAT IMAGE OF CONSENSUS.
LEWIS

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Message Attributes

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